

ABSTRACT

A software appliance and method of operation are disclosed that enable distribution of software applications through consumer-electronic appliances, such as set-top boxes. The appliance and method enable the tracking of the software usage for billing purposes. The usage information is sent to the provider of the software so proper accounting may be accomplished. The software applications may be embedded within the software appliance, such as in a datastore or be accessed via a disk reader or other memory devices, such as a memory stick. Each software application is packaged in a signal format that is compatible with the Advanced Television System Committee ("ATSC") standard 17, also known as the Digital Television Application Software Environment ("DASE") format. The electronic appliance, or the software appliance, receives a broadcast stream of content information and unpacks the software application carried within the broadcast stream. Next, the appliance converts the software application portion into a usable form so that it can be run on the appliance. As the appliance runs the software, a display system receives a signal illustrating the operation of the software and an application program interface allows the user to interact with the application as viewed on the display system.

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